



Loyalty...

A Brief Talk by the Chairman of the United States Maritime Commission, Rear Admiral Emory S. Land (U. S. N. Ret.) to the Shipbuilding Workers of the Ingalls Shipbuilding Corporation, Pascagoula, Mississippi, Saturday, June 28, 1941.

THE shipbuilders of the Gulf Coast have launched today the first all-welded passenger-carrying ship in the history of the world. It is the S. S. AFRICAN COMET which will soon be put in service by the American South African Line. In normal times this would be one of the scientific achievements of the year. Today, its scientific importance is far overshadowed by its importance to our national welfare in adding one more merchant ship capable of serving as a naval auxiliary.

I want to repeat and to stress the descriptions which our President has given of the insecurity of this country today, with a towering wave of ruthless aggression threatening to break over our heads.

The shipbuilders of the Gulf, the Atlantic, and the Pacific Coasts and of the Great Lakes are pushing back that wave with every ship they launch, whether merchant or naval.

All hands are doing a splendid job here in Pascagoula. The Maritime Commission congratulates you! You are the shipbuilders of this country as well as the men who sit in the front office.

The men in the front office are vital but you are the actual "Arm and Hammer Brand" builders. Ships are built by the men in the yards. They are built with cranes and welders' torches and paint brushes and hammers—built by loyal Americans!

Wage Stabilization

Your employers and the Government have given you a genuine incentive for your best all-out efforts in the "Regional Labor Wage Stabilization" programs

recently announced. Ship builders' wages are not increased by millions only, but by hundreds of millions in the overall picture.

We of the Maritime Commission have been told by the President to see that a vast fleet of merchant ships is built—and built while they can still be of some use, that is, built for this war, not—as were the Hog Island ships—for some other war. Time is the essence!

We have told the men in the front offices. They have told you. They know that we must build ships faster than we've ever built them before in our history. You know it, too. We want your cooperation. I have faith in you—I know we will get your cooperation.

You all heard President Roosevelt say in his last fireside talk that:

“The blunt truth is this—and I reveal this with the full knowledge of the British Government: the present rate of Nazi sinkings of merchant ships is more than three times as high as the capacity of British shipyards to replace them; it is more than twice the combined British and American output of merchant ships today.”

All hands in the yards are going to change that by joint effort.

The President said, “We can answer this peril by two simultaneous measures: First, by speeding up and increasing our great shipbuilding program; and second, by helping to cut down the losses on the high seas.”

Partnerships Formed

The President and the men of the Navy are working in partnership on the problem of cutting down losses. But to speed up and increase our shipbuilding program, the partnership changes. In building, every workman in this yard and in every other yard is a partner in the enterprise. Without your partnership this Government cannot deliver on its promise to build ships fast enough to supply, not only Britain and the other Democracies with the vital materials they need to survive, but also to make our commercial, naval, and military defenses impregnable.

Each man should do an honest day's work, and when he has finished it, should go home content in the knowledge that he has done a good job and can do another good day's work tomorrow. And there will be a day's work tomorrow. There will be jobs in shipbuilding for years and the quicker we build the ships, the more jobs there will be. We need 300,000 more workers by 1942.

Our estimates, our promises, and our expectations depend on you—upon the productivity of labor.

National Emergency

Let's be frank about our situation. We are in a state of unlimited emergency, declared by our President. We are in a state of acute danger. If Hitler's Germany will overnight turn and attack a nation which has been on its side, it won't hesitate to attack us, a nation which is clearly playing on the other team.

Some of our fellow citizens are in positions where they will defend us directly against a direct attack. They are your brothers, cousins, and friends in the Army, Navy, and Marines. But just as devastating, just as demoralizing and just as destructive of our homeland is the indirect attack which is already under way in the attempt to wipe out the brotherhood of free, democratic nations.

This powerful "indirect" assault can only be met by an equally powerful indirect offense. That offense lies in the "all-out" production of airplanes and tanks and guns—and ships and more ships.

Again let's be frank. When I ask for your cooperation, I am asking that everyone of you make it his own personal responsibility to build ships fast enough to defeat Hitler. I am asking that every one of you make "that little spark of conscience," which George Washington spoke of, his own guide.

"Spark of Conscience"

I've worked in shipyards and drafting rooms long enough to know that you can greatly increase your output when you put your heart into the job. There are a hundred and one time-consuming practices which can be eliminated, from outright loafing when the leading man or quartermaster is not around, to asking questions of the foreman when you know the answer already. No supervisor can see all these and stop them. I wouldn't want him to if he could. We aren't going to defend ourselves successfully unless the working men of the country want to do the job. If you want to keep Hitler out of this hemisphere, you'll use that "spark of conscience" as your guide and make yourself build faster whether there is a straw boss around or not.

It's like the Captain and Chief Engineer who for years argued bitterly over which was more important to the operation of the ship—the bridge or the engine room. Finally they agreed to change places. After about 5 hours, the Captain came up from the engine room covered with grease and sweating like a horse. "You win," he said, "I've been trying for 3 hours to make her turn over and I'm a failure." "Well, maybe that's partly my fault," said the Chief, "about 3 hours ago I put her aground stern first."

No compulsion but the greatest could get me to ask that work be stopped for an appeal of this sort. But that great compulsion is here!

This is an appeal for loyalty—for loyalty of the greatest kind—loyalty to the British shipyard workers too, loyalty which will preserve their freedom as well as their lives.

Loyalty to these United States! Loyalty to civilization!

We Are Threatened!

And it is loyalty to your own soldiers and sailors and to your own wives, sweethearts, mothers, and children too. Let no one think that this continent is not threatened!

President Roosevelt said, "Nobody can foretell tonight just when the acts of the Dictators will ripen into attack on this hemisphere and us. But we know enough by now to realize that it would be suicide to wait until they are in our front yard."

We don't have enough ships today to meet our needs. In order to give the Army and the Navy auxiliaries like the AFRICAN COMET we have had to cut out normal services and that, in itself, hurts the defense program. It is hurting and will hurt every one of us. We must tighten our belts, we must distribute the burden.

So my plea to you and to all other shipbuilders is to do your jobs—to build these ships as fast as you can.

Very little humor ever crosses the path of the Maritime Commission but occasionally there is a touch of humor in our official documents. The situation today is like that revealed in an action which the Commission took the other day. We were asked to approve the surrender of the marine document of a vessel known as the JUNE BRIDE. The reasons given were "a change in service and a change in tonnage as disclosed by readmeasurement."

Service for Defense

You workers likewise are concerned in a change in service and a change in tonnage. Service for the defense of your country and increased tonnage to "deliver the goods." I hope your answer will be given in the names of two ships which were recently sold to the British, "DON'T WORRY" and "URGE ME"!

Remember, in a Hitler world, if we don't hang together, we'll surely hang separately.

Being a sort of sailor man, may I conclude by paraphrasing the immortal Nelson—The United States expects every man to do his duty. We know you will!

Let's go!